The DoD Family Readiness Challenge

Mission

The Guard and Reserve are essential to our Nation's daily worldwide defense operations. Their contributions are no longer limited to times of national mobilization, but are instead critical to our very ability to project power. The Total Force integration policy has created a seamless force with the mobility and flexibility we need to meet the challenges of a still-dangerous world. Guard and Reserve contributions have not been without cost. In the past three years, Reservists have contributed an annual average of nearly 13 million duty days to Total Force Mission.

Family

Family readiness and mission readiness are inextricably linked. Families play a vital role in the reenlistment decision. Families that are unprepared to withstand the stress of deployment or active duty for training will ultimately impact on unit morale and retention.

Community

The challenge for commanders and senior leaders is to build a partnership among service members, unit leaders, families, and the community. That partnership must prepare and sustain families before, during, and after periods of active duty.

The DoD Family Readiness Response: Initiatives

The *National Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan 2000-2005* published in January 2000 calls for a strong, proactive approach to preparing family members of Guard & Reserve personnel for those periods of time when their service members will be separated from them due to military service. A *Guide to Reserve Family Member Benefits* was published in 1999. Both of these documents clearly demonstrate the commitment of the Department of Defense to Guard and Reserve family readiness and are readily available on the World Wide Web: Reserve Affairs (Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense), http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/.

Unit

As the next step, a new joint Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Toolkit has been developed as a guide for commanders, service members, family members, and family readiness group leaders and volunteers to enhance family readiness. Mission readiness and family readiness are inextricably intertwined and the Readiness Toolkit capitalizes on a joint standardized approach to readiness. This toolkit will fill a void for the 1.2 million Guard and Reserve men and women who represent 1/2 of the Total Force. They are critical contributors to every mission and essential to our national security.

Readiness Toolkit: Your Mobility Resource

The newly published *Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Toolkit* highlights the best practices and models from all seven Guard and Reserve components refined into a joint standardized format. Specifically the toolkit includes:

- Standardized pre-deployment and mobilization checklists
- Sample Command and Family Readiness Group Newsletters
- Standard Forms (Record of Personal Affairs, Military Service Record & Unit Information, Family Information, Employment Record, Important Documents Inventory…)
- Publicity Protocols
- Family Readiness Group Guides, Training Materials, and Volunteer Management
- Healthcare Information (TRICARE)
- Employer Support and ESGR information
- Personal Financial Management
- Legal Affairs
- Special Interest Topics (Parent Education Information, Separations, Reunions, Elder Care)
- Resources and Useful Websites
- Outcome Measures and Survey Instruments

Mission • Family • Community • Unit

The HELP Guide to Guard and Reserve Family Readiness

The seven Guard and Reserve components have strong active family readiness programs meeting the needs of commanders, service members, and family members throughout the nation. The newly developed, *HELP Guide to Guard and Reserve Family Readiness* highlights many of these excellent models.

The increased frequency of global missions continues to place great demands on the accessibility and effectiveness of family readiness programs and services.

All service and family members share common challenges associated with mobilization and family separations. This new guide targets families affected by call-ups and deployments. It provides a common ground to share family readiness program ideas between the services and recognizes the wealth of expertise and information available.

The *HELP Guide to Guard and Reserve Family Readiness* promotes a joint approach and includes unit contact information and Internet access to the specific practices highlighted.

Ensure Total Force Family Readiness

Reserve Component Families – Always Ready

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs
1500 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1500
http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/

National Guard & Reserve Family Readiness

A Key Component of Mission Readiness

Ensure Total Force Family Readiness